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ACADEMIC SENATE FOR CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES NEWSLETTER

SENATEROSTRUM

THE ACADEMIC SENATE FOR CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

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It Really is Like Making Sausage (Sacramento Update)

BY JANE PATTON, PRESIDENT

Now really understand why folks say that legislation is like making sausage. You don't want to know what goes into it or why.

Every few years a bill comes along that directly affects our curriculum, and this year's is Senate Bill (SB) 1440, the "Student Transfer Achievement Reform Act." In its previous life, this "transfer degree" bill had been AB 440 (which the Senate opposed), but when it did not advance, the topic was picked up by Senator Padilla and morphed into SB 1440. While there are aspects of the bill that faculty oppose, the good news is that the newer bill preserves the integrity of associate degrees and provides our students not only with more opportunities to earn degrees but also guarantees admission to CSU. You might recall that the Academic Senate reversed its previous opposition to "transfer degrees" when Resolution 4.03 was passed at the Spring 2010 plenary session. Our position now is to support SB 1440 if it is permissive rather than mandatory.

The bill states, "This bill would require the California State University to guarantee admission with junior status to any community college student who meets the requirements for the associate degree for transfer." The degrees must include 60 transferable units including either IGETC or CSU GE, and at least 18 units in a major/area of emphasis and may not include additional local requirements.

Because at the time of this writing the bill has not become law, we do not know its final form, so I recommend that you go to <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/> to see the final version. It is expected that the bill will be signed in September, with great fanfare.

During the summer, the bill was moving along, enjoying widespread support. But in early August, some dramatic changes suddenly appeared which caused a huge uproar. Scott Lay, CEO/President of the Community College League of California (CCLC), summarized the situation this way in his newsletter to CEOs on August 10, 2010.

"Because the bill mandates local community colleges to develop and offer these degrees, it falls under the California State Constitution's clause that requires the state to reimburse colleges for any associated cost. While we believe the costs to our colleges are absorbable and waiting until the state has additional money is unacceptable, the legislation was recently amended to tie receipt of state apportionment funds to the local adoption of transfer degrees. We believe this sets a bad precedent and could be used in the future to impose more costly and less educationally critical mandates. Therefore, we are working with the Chancellor's Office to get all college districts to sign a waiver that opts out of

If we can get seventy-two district waivers, we are fairly certain that we can get the apportionment language removed from the bill."

the mandate claim process for the requirements for the bill. If we can get seventy-two district waivers, we are fairly certain that we can get the apportionment language removed from the bill.”

Amazingly, all 72 districts did sign a letter and the apportionment clause has been rendered inoperative, although the language will remain in the official record.

In the last few weeks of August, faculty and staff members raised a great number of questions about the details of the bill’s implementation, and of course those details have not been worked out yet. The Chancellor’s Office and the Academic Senate will provide information especially to senate presidents, curriculum chairs and CIOs all along the way, and the best advice I can give right now is to wait and see. It is premature to make any local changes and unwise to speculate or panic while the implementation

guidelines are worked out. The goal will be to encourage some system-wide processes rather than each of the 112 colleges developing 112 responses to the bill. The Academic Senate will be very active in every phase of implementation.

So, back to the sausage metaphor. What has been evident in the last weeks as the bill kept changing is that competing constituents have added their two cents’ worth to the bill; unfortunately that can result in changes that are piecemeal and uncoordinated. For example, one group (e.g., CSU) might ask for certain language; then the next day another group (e.g., the Campaign for College Opportunity or the CCC Chancellor’s Office) pitches their changes. The trouble is the two (or ten) constituent groups may never talk directly to one another. How bills



change appears to depend on who gets there the most often and what compromises the sponsors or authors need to make with others. And in this system of term limits, the staffers and legislators may have limited knowledge about the subject of a bill. In this case, language changes sometimes occurred daily. I imagine what occurred was that either the CSU or CCC Chancellor's Office would propose something but because simultaneously a different revision was being added, no one knew what the actual current language was. From my perspective, it seemed to be similar to someone editing an earlier draft of a paper when the document had already been modified.

Trying to keep up with the evolution of bills during August—the last month of the legislative session—has been crazy making. When I try to make sense of things, I keep being reminded that using logic doesn't work in Sacramento. Legislation is not accomplished the way we normally try to behave, as academics. In governance activities, for example, whether local or state, we recognize there are different constituents who each want their voices heard. I get that. But at least some of the time we can all sit down together, discuss and debate our views, and come to some sort of consensus. Not so with legislation. One has to wait and see what surprises are around the corner.

You may be aware of recent discussions among some articulation officers opposing the SB 1440 requirement that the new degrees include at least 18 units in a major or an area of emphasis (which mirrors the current requirement for all degrees in Title 5). Over the last several years, the Academic Senate has written papers, Rostrum articles and resolutions that clarify the need for students to demonstrate some in-depth knowledge of a discipline if they are to earn a degree. It is noteworthy that under SB 1440, students are not only preparing to transfer, but also earning a degree; hence the need for the specialized, in-depth study beyond the minimal transfer preparation. The students earning an AA for transfer under SB 1440 are simultaneously preparing for the university, but should they never complete the baccalaureate degree, their associate

degree must be able to stand on its own as a college degree, like any other AA or AS degree.

In the Academic Senate 2005 paper, *What is the Meaning of a California Community College Degree*, Title 5 is quoted, a passage that is now in section 55061.

The awarding of an Associate Degree is intended to represent more than an accumulation of units. It is to symbolize a successful attempt on the part of the college to lead students through patterns of learning experiences designed to develop certain capabilities and insights. Among these are the ability to think and to communicate clearly and effectively both orally and in writing; to use mathematics; to understand the modes of inquiry of the major disciplines; to be aware of other cultures and times; to achieve insights gained through experience in thinking about ethical problems; and to develop the capacity for self-understanding. In addition to these accomplishments, the student shall possess sufficient depth in some field of knowledge to contribute to lifetime interest.
(p. 6)

So what's next for SB 1440? The saying "the devil's in the details" is often quoted in regard to the implementation of SB 1440. The list of details to be worked out following the passage of SB 1440 grows longer by the day. Please know that the Academic Senate aims to facilitate the response to this bill that will most benefit students and preserve the academic quality of associate degrees. We have already begun discussions with the CSU Academic Senate and with the C-ID Steering Committee, the course identification numbering initiative, to coordinate the implementation efforts. While SB 1440 does not require CSU discipline faculty's concurrence with the content of associate degrees, our intention is to find every possible way to facilitate intersegmental discipline faculty consensus-building, as we believe students will be best served if all the 60 units they take help prepare them for upper division. We will keep you informed and involved through senate and curriculum listservs, conferences, and additional events and publications.

P.S. I am happier than ever that I never go near sausage. ■

Regarding Prerequisite Policy in the California Community Colleges

BY NANCY SHULOCK, DIRECTOR, INSTITUTE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION AND POLICY, CSU SACRAMENTO
(Presented to the Board of Governors at their July 2010 meeting and reprinted with the author's permission)

Let's start with some big picture facts:

- ◆ College attainment in the US is slipping—causing President Obama to call for the US to set the goal to once again lead the world in the percent of adults with college degrees
- ◆ College attainment in CA is slipping faster than the rest of the country—younger age groups in CA are progressively less well educated and our rank among states in percentage of the working age population with a college degree has slipped from 3rd (ages 65 and older) to 31st (ages 25-34)
- ◆ A huge reason for low national college attainment is that while enrollment is high, completion rates are low—across all sectors, but especially in community colleges
- ◆ A huge reason that college completion rates are low is that most students begin needing remediation but never transition successfully to college level work, let alone to college completion
- ◆ A major reason students often never get through remedial education is that effective remedial education practices have not yet been implemented on a large scale
- ◆ The vast majority of students entering California's community colleges are not prepared for college level work
- ◆ The current system for establishing prerequisites through statistical validation is rarely used due to its complexity and the difficulty of meeting established statistical criteria; therefore, few prerequisites are in place
- ◆ With few prerequisites, students have open access to college-level courses whether or not they can read or write at college level or perform basic mathematics
- ◆ Many of those students fail or drop the courses and many succeed in the courses—earning a C or better
- ◆ We don't and can't know the relative percentages of under-prepared students who succeed or fail in college-level courses because assessment isn't strictly required and assessment scores are not recorded in the MIS system—so we don't know which students in the college-level courses were under-prepared

Now some facts about the current process that is under discussion:

What we have are two diametrically opposed belief systems and, while each side can call the other “racist,” I don't believe it sheds any light on their respective positions to do so.

- ◆ One side genuinely believes that **setting prerequisites will harm under-represented**

minority students by consigning them to basic skills sequences from which they will not emerge. They cite data showing that substantial numbers of under-prepared students pass transfer-level courses without first completing reading, writing, and/or math remediation as evidence that we direct too many students to basic skills courses.

- ♦ The other side genuinely believes that **failing to set prerequisites will harm under-represented minority students** by allowing them to enroll in classes for which they are not prepared to succeed. They cite data showing that substantial numbers of under-prepared students fail to successfully complete transfer-level courses and cite anecdotal evidence of faculty acknowledging the need to lower academic standards to accommodate students in their classes who lack fundamental skills in reading, writing, and/or math.

This issue cannot be resolved on the basis of available data:

- ♦ We lack student-level data on high school transcripts and college assessment results to know who is, and who is not, judged to be proficient when they enroll in transfer-level classes, so we cannot compare the performance of students with equal preparation levels who take a transfer-level course with or without having become proficient.
- ♦ We lack measures of quality/standards for college-level classes so we cannot judge whether under-prepared students pass those courses because they mastered college-level work without completing basic skills or because the course could be successfully completed without, for example, having to read or write at college level.
- ♦ We lack measures of quality/standards for remedial courses, so if data show that students are not helped by remediation, we don't know

whether it is because they should not be directed to remediation or because the remedial courses are not of sufficient quality.

But we can learn from what leading-edge states are doing to increase the success of under-prepared students for whom traditional remedial sequences have not proven effective. A review of developmental education policy reforms reveals the following trends¹:

1) To minimize the time that students spend in remedial coursework by replacing long sequences of semester-long courses with options that include:

- » modular courses with open entry/open exit as students' competencies dictate
- » contextualized remedial courses whereby students learn basic skills in the context of substantive content, sometimes in paired courses
- » supplemental remedial instruction where students with limited deficiencies enroll in college-level courses and receive targeted assistance with needed basic skills

2) To achieve a balance between permissiveness and restrictiveness with respect to access to college-level courses by under-prepared students by:

- » allowing students into college-level courses concurrent with their remedial enrollments as long as the course does not require skills related to those that need remediation (the key being reading—states generally do not allow students who are not proficient in reading to take college-level courses)
- » requiring students to begin and complete remediation early by setting limits, for example, on the number of credits students may earn before completing remediation

¹ Education Commission of the States, *Getting Past Go: Rebuilding the Remedial Education Bridge to College Success*, May, 2010, as supplemented by personal communication with lead author Bruce Vandal, July 2, 2010.

3) To use content review to support the overall reform goal of ensuring that students spend only the minimal time needed in remedial education by:

- » examining and aligning the content of college-level and remedial courses
- » using that content review as the basis for placing or directing students into appropriate courses

Drawing on these lessons, I am supportive of the proposed policy change to allow for content review as a basis for colleges to set prerequisites.

- ◆ It aligns with the best thinking on how to simultaneously improve remedial instruction while taking a balanced approach to the prerequisite issue
- ◆ It is a major step towards improving basic skills—by encouraging colleges to be clear on the skills and competencies that students need in college level courses and designing basic skills courses accordingly
- ◆ It lays the foundation for more diagnostic use of assessments so that students can be directed only to those basic skills courses or modules or contextualized courses that they need—shortening the time they spend in remediation
- ◆ It lays the foundation for creating a set of clear college readiness standards that can communicate to K-12 what will be expected of students who enter the community colleges
- ◆ It replaces problematic statistical processes with purposeful alignment of course content, in line with what the leading reform states are doing and consistent with a new report by two leading national policy centers on improving college readiness by aligning competency expectations and assessing proficiencies.²

² *Beyond the Rhetoric: Improving college readiness through coherent state policy.* National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education and Southern Regional Education Board, June 2010.

An expert on state developmental education policy reported that no other state has such a prescriptive policy for what institutions have to do or cannot do to try to improve the basic skills of under-prepared students and none has the kind of “onerous” statistical validation that California has.³ He confirmed that leading states, such as Texas, Virginia, Tennessee, and North Carolina, are using content review as the driving force in reforming the delivery of developmental education to improve outcomes for under-prepared students.

With more explicit reference to prerequisites, another leading expert summarized the new directions as follows⁴:

The most thoughtful states are trying to strike a delicate balance on assessment and placement policy. On one hand, policies that are too permissive allow students to enroll in college-credit courses without adequate preparation or support, setting up both the student and the institution for failure. On the other hand, overly restrictive policies may require students who have a reasonable chance of succeeding without intervention, such as those who fall just below the established cut score for placement into remediation, to enroll in developmental education anyway....Effective state assessment and placement policies will strike a balance between restrictive and permissive rules. (Collins, p.9)

The proposal to allow content review reflects these best efforts by putting the focus on course content and letting faculty at the colleges determine what mix of separate basic skills courses, modular courses, integrated courses, etc. will help students acquire the competencies they need in the shortest possible time. ■

³ Bruce Vandal, Education Commission of the States, personal communication, July 2, 2010.

⁴ Michael Lawrence Collins, *Setting Up Success in Developmental Education: How State Policy Can Help Community Colleges Improve Student Success Outcomes.* Boston: Jobs for the Future, June 2009.

Focus on Equity and Diversity

Interviews with Stanback-Stroud Diversity Award winner, Nicholas Arnold, and Regina Stanback-Stroud

BY DAVID CLAY, PROFESSOR IN ENGLISH AT CAÑADA COLLEGE, MEMBER OF THE EQUITY AND DIVERSITY ACTION COMMITTEE OF THE ACADEMIC SENATE FOR CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Established in 1998 by the Academic Senate, the Stanback-Stroud Diversity Award recognizes one California community college faculty member each year who has shown outstanding commitment to diversity. “It publicly acknowledges the individual who performs in an exceptional manner to advance intercultural harmony, equity, and campus diversity by making exceptional contributions to the college beyond usual obligations.”

The 2010 recipient, Nick Arnold, also a nominee for the Rice Award from the State Chancellor’s office, is a one-person department of Engineering at Santa Barbara City College (SBCC), where he has taught for eight years. He was previously with Alan Hancock College (AHC) for six years. His selection as this year’s recipient of the Stanback-Stroud Diversity Award was based on his long-term commitment to diversity and equity both in and out of the classroom.

Outstanding among his achievements is his work with these programs:

California Mathematics and Sciences Teacher Initiative. Recruited and mentored students as interns in the sciences and mathematics to be part of this University of California program.

Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS). He promoted among students the formation of a local chapter

of this national organization, and continues to be their advisor.

Internships in Nanosystems, Science, Engineering and Technology (INSET). Nick leads this summer institute at our local University of California (UC) campus every year. He recruits students from our local region community colleges and from the UC campus itself.

Mathematics, Science, Engineering Achievement (MESA) Program. Nick was instrumental in establishing the MESA program, at both SBCC and AHC.

Engineering Program. Nick has consolidated the Engineering program at Santa Barbara City College. His Engineering 101 class is a powerful introduction for students to explore a career in this area.

Nick is a proud recipient of the Stanback-Stroud Diversity Award and was glad to participate in a short interview:

Congratulations! You must feel honored to receive this prestigious award.

I am indeed honored.

What are you most proud of in your efforts toward diversity?

I am most proud of establishing the MESA (Mathematics, Science, Engineering Achievement) pro-

gram, at both SBCC and AHC, which provides help to approximately 100 underrepresented, first generation students in the STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) fields each year at each college. I also helped to start a SHPE (Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers) student chapter, and a SACNAS (Society for Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science) student chapter—SHPE is geared toward engineering job placement and SACNAS is geared to advanced degrees.

Are you optimistic about community colleges in California?

Yes, our disadvantaged, underpowered groups are getting more attention. Programs like MESA are important. Our school is close to becoming a Hispanic Serving Institution, which will help us.

But I'm scared that the recent influx to community colleges of students who are turned away from the UCs and the California State Universities (CSU) will push out the students from underpowered backgrounds that we have served for so many years.

Do you have a good relationship with you neighbor, UC Santa Barbara?

Yes, we have a fabulous relationship—they have been very generous with resources and advice.

How about your feeder schools? Do you have good relationships with them?

I am a little disappointed that we don't have better connections with our high schools. They push their students towards the four-year schools, but we know that students who come to community colleges first are likely to do better in the long term. The stats are clear that our transfer students outperform their counterparts at the four-years.

Are you thinking about courses in sustainability?

Yes, we are thinking about a sustainability program, but it's tough because the four-year schools haven't firmed up their programs yet. This means that we can't articulate courses that we might offer. Our

students don't have the luxury of taking classes that won't meet requirements at their transfer schools. We do have a Sustainability Club and a Student Leaders in Science Club that is working on a green house project and is making biofuel.

What else have you been working on?

A Staff Development Workshop on "How to Help a More Diverse Group of Students in the Classroom" that will happen every year for new faculty. The workshop emphasizes using Active Learning Strategies, which are known to help a more diverse set of learning styles. The workshop utilizes a video that I am happy to share with everyone.

Are you happy with your workshop?

Yes, it feels great to share teaching strategies that are more inclusive, but it is also important to know who else on campus is supportive of diversity.

What effect will the Stanback-Stroud award have on you and your school?

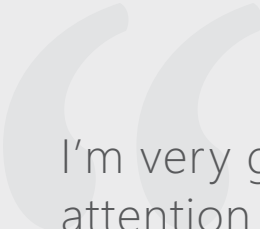
More attention! We may have industry donations, and the award will bring more focus on diversity with our school.

Thanks for your time and energy with this interview, and congratulations again.

A tireless advocate for diversity and equity in our schools, Regina Stanback-Stroud was glad to share some ideas about the current state of California Community Colleges particularly with respect to budget issues and their effect on our under-represented student populations:

The Stanback-Stroud Diversity Award has done a lot to draw attention to the great work for diversity and equity by California Community College faculty across the state. You must be very proud that the award is so successful.

Yes. I'm very glad that attention is being drawn to some of the good work that faculty and staff are doing throughout the system. It is important that we as educators figure out how to equitably serve all of our students.



I'm very glad that attention is being drawn to some of the good work that faculty and staff are doing throughout the system. It is important that we as educators figure out how to equitably serve all of our students.

Are you optimistic about equity and diversity in our Community Colleges?

Yes, I want to be, but the challenges are enormous. The issues are more compelling in these times. Consider now the cumulative effect of all of the various movements afoot. There is a conflation of forces which is leading to systemic and systematic exclusion of major groups of students, specifically black and brown students.

Do you think that the budget reductions have a disproportional effect on our underrepresented populations?

I think the ways in which the system as a whole—including campuses across the state—have responded to the budget reductions will have a disproportionate impact on students of color. Race and class are inextricably linked, so the effect is not only on students of color but poor people in general. The brilliance of the Master Plan was to create a system whereby education would not be reserved for the elite, but instead anyone with the ability to benefit from an education could and would be able to have access to an education. The problem is that the voting public seems to be seriously questioning the importance of

supporting public education. At precisely the time that the state no longer has a majority population of any one group, there is a chorus of voices questioning whether money should be allocated. I believe there will be serious consequences to the State's retreat from public education.

What specific consequences for the community colleges are you thinking of?

Consider the following: (1) budget constraints are limiting access to classes and services, (2) categorical programs that were created in the context of civil rights have been deconstructed through de-funding, (3) there is a movement to require standardized placement testing across the state, (4) there is a concurrent movement to require students to go into the basic skills sequence before taking classes that are typically gateways to degree attainment, (5) the plan to limit noncredit education is underway, (6) regulations are being proposed to remove the requirement to empirically validate prerequisites and ensure they are established in a way that is fair and unbiased, and (7) CSU redirects are showing up to campus in force. All of these factors together will have the effect of displacing and marginalizing students of color.

How about questions of pedagogy and its impact on our diverse student populations? For example, Nick Arnold talks about Active Learning, which, in practice, means that he never talks for more than 15 minutes at a time without student participation.

Yes, I do believe the answer to increasing student success includes implementing practices of critical pedagogy. Again, doing so will help all students. But we need to think better about professional development and ensuring faculty and staff have access to strategies for increasing success. A lot of practices that have promise are emerging, but faculty need real support. For example, in one of our learning communities we put a counselor and a tutor in the classroom. While it might be a strategy to serve diverse students, in reality all students benefit from these efforts.

Do you think that community colleges have done enough to push back against the budget hawks and the no-taxers?

Absolutely not. In fact, I know the budget is created in the midst of negotiations between the system, organizations, lawmakers, and the various offices that support the legislative infrastructure. This budget that decimated the categorical programs did not come from out of the blue. I believe it was put on the table by our advocates. I believe that our leadership organizations and system representatives walked over and put these items on the table. I believe it was part of the deal making. This was a budget crisis that was used as an opportunity to accomplish a long-standing agenda. Forces in our system have been trying to de-categorize the categoricals for de-

grades—all in the name of flexibility. There has been an ongoing cry for relief of mandates. Well the budget crisis came along and, poof, civil rights programs are cut, the remaining money can now be used in a “flexible” way and we have a relief of mandates in those programs.

Amazing, but it doesn't have to end this way. I am placing my hope in the many faculty and staff who are doing great work to equitably serve students. So yes, that means to me that the Stanback Stroud Diversity Awards represent the hope and the struggle that must continue.

Thanks for your thoughts, and your fine example as a committed educator! ■

Academic Senate Website

BY JULIE ADAMS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Have you checked out the new Senate website? On September 1, 2010, the Senate launched its new website. The Senate site now has a number of new features to enhance the work of the Senate as well as provide local senates and the California college community with important and current information. Some of the new features are:

- ◆ A robust search engine that will allow you to now search across the site including publications, Rostrums, resolutions, committees, and more. This search engine will also allow you to specify what type of content you want to search from resolutions to publications to events and so on.
- ◆ A new calendar that allows you to sort events by various categories and import them into your iCal. It also allows organizations and individuals to add events that are relevant to faculty statewide.
- ◆ New pages specifically designated for Area meetings. You now can go to one place to find the Area meeting agendas, information pertinent to areas, as well as area resolutions and minutes.

- ◆ A new way to search the Rostrum. In the past, you needed to know the month an article was published to local articles. Now, you can search Rostrums by title, date, and author. We also hope to add a function so you will be able to search by topic. For now, you can search by topic via the main search function.
- ◆ Public access to the California community college directory. Finally, we have the Senate directory online. In the near future, local senate presidents or staff will be able to update information online. This will make the information dynamic and up to date immediately.

We are very excited to bring the new website to you this year. Many thanks to Rita Sabler, our Creative Director, for all her work in developing this new site. As you check out the new site, please give us your feedback. On the bottom of the front page of the site, there is a link where you can provide us with your suggestions. Your feedback is very important so please tell us know what you think! ■

Facilitating the Success of ALL Students

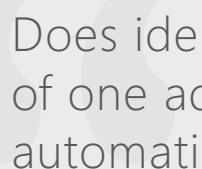
BY STEPHANIE DUMONT, CHAIR, EQUITY AND DIVERSITY ACTION COMMITTEE
BETH SMITH, CHAIR, CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

English is one of a few languages where grammar dictates that the adjective come before the noun: big house, pretty girl, green truck, etc. In other languages, the noun comes first, allowing the listener or reader to focus first on the object and secondarily on a description or characteristic of it. Has this simple element of our language affected our ability to adequately address the needs of our students? Are we hearing only “basic skills,” when a colleague refers to basic skills *students*? Or “Hispanic,” when someone says Hispanic *students*? Or is it the case that English as the universal language has it right and we should hear “Hispanic” first? Does knowing that a student is a female student cause us to generalize and stereotype her or cause us to tune in more to her? Does identification of one adjective automatically exclude students with other characteristics? Whatever happened to serving *community college* students?

The primary adjective used by the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges to describe students is the word “all.” The Senate has been focused on all students and their success since its inception. To realize the goal of serving all students, certain standing committees of the Academic Senate are charged with addressing issues that parallel some of the adjectives we use to describe our students. For example, the Senate has a Basic Skills Committee, an Equity and Diversity Action Committee, and an Occupational Education Committee, to name a few. Within the committees of the Senate, we are able to address the specific needs of special population students and the faculty serving these students.

The Academic Senate’s committee structure acknowledges that the needs of our students vary and that efforts are needed to ensure the effectiveness of our teaching as we work with different populations of students. We celebrate the many forms of student diversity and work to help faculty across the state to better serve them knowing that strategies and efforts to support one group of students can have far-reaching, positive effects to improve success for many students.

Having committees that focus on special populations is only the beginning. On-going and far-reaching efforts are needed to provide the most beneficial learning opportunities for our “place-adjective-here” student populations. One such effort, the Basic Skills Initiative (BSI), developed due to a recognized need for students to meet the new mathematics and English graduation requirements, has had a domino

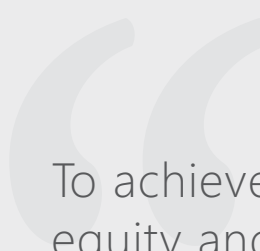


Does identification of one adjective automatically exclude students with other characteristics? Whatever happened to serving community college students?

effect on curriculum, student and instructional support services, professional development, and student equity measures. Many of the efforts designed to assist basic skills students have proven advantageous for all students, such as classroom assessment techniques and improved coordination between instruction and student services. The same is true of many of the strategies created for ethnic, gender or other student cohorts where the target group benefits, but so do many other students who happen to be involved in or on the receiving end of the strategies. Umoja, MESA (Mathematics Engineering Science Achievement), and student clubs are examples of efforts where the targeted students benefit, but so do other students sharing classes or activities with these students. Whether students are noncredit or credit, disabled, veterans, lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender, Asian, African-American, Hispanic, part-time, basic skills, men or women, all have the opportunity to improve because of innovative efforts directed at small groups of students that invariably have widespread influence over all students.

However, BSI also revealed that some student populations experience disproportionate rates of failure or success (depending on if your cup is half empty or half full). After participating in basic skills regional meetings, developing basic skills funding plans and reading more information about basic skills learners, faculty looked at student equity data from their colleges and began to realize that more needs to be done to improve student success for all cohorts. If 70-80% of all California community college students are also basic skills students, then college efforts to increase success for basic skills students ultimately means that nearly all students benefit from those efforts. Effective teaching practices transcend a cohort.

To achieve student equity and success for all students, then, every strategy to improve student success must be on the table for consideration. Tutoring, learning communities, contextualized learning, and other approaches are being used at colleges across the state to improve success for all students. Faculty are redesigning curriculum for accelerated courses



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and implementing new technologies as the means to engage students and reduce the time spent completing courses or requirements. These efforts constitute interventions that help all students regardless of the characteristics of the students. As additional needs arise, additional interventions are implemented, and faculty should be encouraged to consider all ways to increase student learning and the successful completion of courses and programs of study.

Another effective strategy is the establishment of prerequisites. After more research examining practices across the nation and relying on the expertise of faculty in the state, the desire for increased student success for all students leads faculty to conclude that it is time to revisit establishing appropriate prerequisites on some courses. Keeping with the Academic Senate principle of serving all students and its insistence on considering every strategy for their success, faculty will soon be able to use their professional expertise through content review to determine if one or more prerequisites are necessary for students to successfully complete a course. Content review focuses strictly on the content and objectives of the course, making it the best tool to use for determining the knowledge and skills necessary for students to obtain prior to enrolling in a higher-level course. ■

Good Questions Deserve Good Answers: Screening to Increase Diversity

BY THE EQUITY AND DIVERSITY ACTION COMMITTEE 2009 - 2010

Diversity, what a concept! In the effort to seek cultural competence and equity in faculty ranks, the Academic Senate's Equity and Diversity Action Committee (EDAC) has compiled various screening questions concerning diversity for your consideration. The questions might be used as a mainstay on hiring committees statewide for the purpose of increasing and recognizing diversity within the California Community College system. EDAC hopes to alleviate the anxiety of creating usable questions and understanding good answers to such questions by providing these examples.

Some things to avoid:

- ◆ Asking questions for which your department or area has not agreed on an acceptable and scorable answer.
- ◆ Asking a question about commitment to diversity that is too vague. These types of questions typically receive vague answers that downplay the real importance of embracing diverse students and colleagues.
- ◆ Asking how someone “managed” diversity puts the emphasis on diversity as something that is problematic and needs managing.

Other recommendations:

- ◆ Look for answers that include multiple representations of diversity today (cultural, Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender (LGBT),

disabilities, gender, age, religion, immigrants, socio-economic, etc.)

- ◆ Look for answers that demonstrate the applicant's actual and direct experiences with diverse groups. Look for an investment in diversity rather than simply “supervised someone who” or “attended xxxx event.” Look for direct involvement and for experiences rather than exposure.
- ◆ Look for answers that demonstrate an applicant's knowledge of their own culture and the cultures of others.
- ◆ Rather than use a question for screening applicants on their knowledge of diversity, try using role play and scenarios where applicants can respond to issues of diversity “on the spot.”
- ◆ Examine college materials that an applicant might review before coming to an interview (web site, catalog, campus buildings/signs/ etc.) and see if these materials communicate the college's value of diversity. This will help applicants know that these questions are serious and require well-constructed answers rather than rhetoric.
- ◆ Be sure that departments, disciplines or areas determine ahead of time what an appropriate response to the diversity question looks and sounds like. This may already be done with content specific questions, so it should be true for questions asked about commitment to diverse students and colleagues. ■

Sample Interview Questions on Diversity

Explain how diversity has played a role in your career and contributed to the teacher/counselor/librarian/xxxx you are today.

What books/materials/authors have you read on the subject of diversity? What did you find useful to apply to working with heterogeneous cohorts of students?

What is your vision of a college, such as our college, that fully embraces diversity?

How have you participated in diversity events and organizations at other colleges and/or universities?

Provide us with examples of how you incorporate the diversity of your students in your classroom lessons or encounters with students or colleagues.

What ideas do you have about diversity in the classroom?

What programs have you developed in the area of diversity?

What role has diversity played in shaping your teaching/counseling/advising styles?

Describe your involvement in writing or shaping a college plan (program review, matriculation, equity, academic master plan, professional development, accreditation, etc.) where you were the champion for diversity and equity within the plan or its outcomes.

As a higher education professional, what work have you done in promoting diversity in the community?

Provide the candidate with the mission statement that includes how the college values diversity. How

has your experience and background prepared you to be effective in this environment with this diversity value?

What do you see as the most challenging aspect of a diverse working environment? What steps have you taken to meet this challenge?

How have you handled situations where a colleague was not accepting of another's diversity?

What does it mean to have a commitment to diversity and how would you develop and apply your commitment at this college?

How did your current/former college demonstrate its commitment to diversity? What did you contribute to the college's commitment to diversity?

What efforts have you made, or been involved with, to foster diversity understanding and reduction of bias?

What have you done to further your knowledge about diversity? Have you included diversity in your professional development? How have you demonstrated what you have learned?

What kind of leadership efforts would you make to ensure a commitment to diversity initiatives for the college?

What strategies have you used to address diversity challenges? What were some successful strategies that you have used?

Beyond the Classroom: Fostering Civic Engagement in our Students

BY DAVID MORSE, CURRICULUM COMMITTEE, DENNIS GERVIN, CIO LIAISON, CURRICULUM COMMITTEE, WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM REID MILBURN, SSSCC PRESIDENT 2009-2010; CHRISTIAN YOUNGER, SSSCC LIAISON, CURRICULUM COMMITTEE; AND RACHAEL RICHARDS, SSSCC SENATOR AT-LARGE COUNCIL MEMBER

Most faculty will agree that a student's education involves more than just classroom instruction. Students also benefit from active participation in and awareness of their own communities, beginning at the college level and expanding outward to encompass citywide, statewide, and even national issues. Various Academic Senate resolutions over the past several years have noted the importance of student involvement, the most recent being resolution 9.04 from Fall 2009, which called for the Academic Senate to "encourage local senates to work with their faculty and local student leaders to identify means of incorporating civic engagement in curriculum and assignments." However, while this particular resolution focuses on curriculum, direct instructional activities are only one of many ways in which faculty can promote civic engagement. A variety of barriers may inhibit or prevent students' involvement on their campuses and in their communities, but colleges, senates, and individual faculty can employ a number of approaches to help students overcome those barriers and achieve a more complete and meaningful educational experience.

Impediments to Student Involvement

Multiple factors can discourage students from becoming involved in activities that might enhance their academic careers and deepen their appreciation and understanding of important issues. In the case

of college governance, the first impediment may be students' lack of understanding regarding the importance of their role. Many students are accustomed to high school "student council" organizations whose primary function is to plan parties and activities. However, Education Code section 76060 indicates that student organizations at community colleges are to have a much more significant role:

The governing board of a community college district may authorize the students of a college to organize a student body association. The association *shall* encourage students to participate in the governance of the college and *may* conduct any activities, including fundraising activities, as may be approved by the appropriate college officials. (emphasis added)

Thus, according to Education Code, the principal function of student organizations is to represent the student body in college governance, with activity planning taking a secondary and optional position. Many students coming from high school are unaware of this important role in their college's leadership structure, and therefore they may be less likely to become involved with a body that they do not see as significant.

Likewise, students may be unaware of opportunities for involvement on their campuses and in their communities. Many important events that could interest or inspire students are not well publicized


in some areas, including campus club activities, political rallies, social events, neighborhood or campus cleanups, and others. Often student organizations wish to cultivate interest in such events but have limited avenues for communication with the entire body of students on their campuses. Student participation is thus limited because many students do not know about the various opportunities for involvement available to them.

Perhaps the most commonly cited impediments to civic engagement by students are factors such as family issues, classroom and study demands, and work obligations due to limited financial resources. Community college students frequently are unable to devote themselves as fully as they might wish to their academic careers because they are balancing work, family, and study. For such students, the time required to engage in campus activities or in the community may seem simply unavailable. The desire to become involved may be present, but the reality of the student experience at the community college can conflict with that desire in many ways.

Fostering Civic Engagement at the Local Level

Colleges and faculty can encourage students toward civic engagement in various ways. Senates, programs, individual instructors or professors, and even colleges as a whole can all find avenues to foster awareness of and involvement in the lives of their campuses and communities.

Local senates can work with their colleges' student organizations to help those organizations appreciate and understand their importance in college governance. Faculty can lobby to ensure that students are offered representative seats on college committees involving curriculum, planning, budget, and all other bodies on which a student perspective may prove valuable. Senates often find student organizations to be a valuable partner, as the joined voices of students and faculty can call greater attention to an issue or help to move an initiative forward more effectively.



In the case of college governance, the first impediment may be students' lack of understanding regarding the importance of their role.

Colleges can also foster student involvement by recognizing its significance in official documents or statements regarding the institution's mission, values, and outcomes. Columbia College, for example, cites the importance of civic engagement in one section of its vision statement:

Columbia College will be a center for transformational learning promoted through critical and creative thinking that is open to change and personal growth; *civic, environmental, and global awareness and engagement*; and individual and collective responsibility. We will promote a culture of support for student learning across the institution that adopts a holistic approach. (emphasis added)

Likewise, Columbia College includes civic engagement as one of the institution's core values through the following statement: "We value civic and global awareness. We promote the understanding and betterment of our planet by engaging our community." Similar declarations regarding the importance of student involvement could be included in mission statements, general education outcomes, and other documents. Such highlighting of civic engagement will help students, faculty, and the public see the importance that the college attaches to awareness of and interaction with issues and experiences that reach beyond the classroom.

Some colleges have also developed extra-curricular programs to encourage student engagement. Within the Yosemite Community College District, both Columbia College and Modesto Junior College have developed and formalized Civic Engagement projects. The “MJC Civic Engagement Project” states its purpose as promoting “responsible social stewardship as a primary value in higher education” through a joint effort of the Yosemite Community College District, the college’s associated students organization, and the League of Women Voters of Modesto. The project includes film and lecture presentations, voter registration drives, environmental efforts, and multicultural education components.

Other faculty members promote civic engagement through classroom projects as a part of their curriculum. At Long Beach City College, the “Long Beach Communities Studies Project” came into being because “the faculty felt it was essential that students develop an awareness of the communities of which they are a part. Teaching and applying research skills on topics of pressing concern proves to be a promising vehicle for making students into engaged, informed local, national, and global citizens” (longbeachstudies.lbcc.edu). Classes from such disciplines as history, geography, sociology, anthropology, and economics have joined with external organizations including the National Archives and Records Regional office, the Historical Society of Long Beach, the Long Beach ACLU, Long Beach Public Health Department, Public Housing Department, Long Beach Unified School District, Port of Long Beach, and Long Beach Police Department Commission to develop research projects and other activities that students complete as class assignments, thus furthering their education within the classroom by engaging with the community outside.

Finally, perhaps the simplest method through which faculty can foster student involvement is by regularly taking a small amount of class time to publicize upcoming events. Whether faculty provide students with an opportunity to make such announcements or faculty make the announcements

themselves, such practices can call possibilities for involvement to the attention of busy students who might otherwise not be aware of the events.

Encouraging Student Involvement Beyond the Local Community

In many cases, the same types of strategies and efforts that promote local involvement can likewise encourage students toward engagement at the state level. The Student Senate for California Community Colleges (SSCCC) was created “to communicate a unified student perspective to relevant constituent groups and elected officials in all matters directly affecting California Community College students” (www.studentsenateccc.org), and advocacy efforts by the SSCCC have proven very effective. The most recent general assembly of the SSCCC had over six hundred students from around the state in attendance. Yet because student leadership has a high turnover rate simply due to students moving on through graduation or transfer, colleges must continue to encourage student leaders to appreciate the importance of their voice, to attend the student general assemblies as well as Academic Senate plenary sessions, to involve themselves in local activities regarding statewide issues, and to participate in the SSCCC as elected representatives or through other means. Local academic senates can work to communicate this message to student organizations, and faculty in general can promote statewide involvement through the same methods they might use to foster local awareness.

Student participation is necessary for effective governance at the state and local levels, but, more importantly, civic engagement is an essential aspect of a complete and well-rounded education. Many avenues exist for encouraging this engagement, and by fostering student involvement faculty and colleges will enhance the educational experience of our students and more fully prepare those students to be active and productive members of their communities after that educational experience ends. ■

Where is the Money? Financing Community Colleges in California

BY MICHELLE PILATI, VICE-PRESIDENT

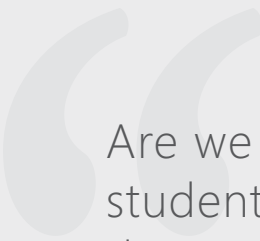
We all have our areas of expertise and interest—and budget is not mine—I am not a budget person. But, when things are as bad as they are now—aren't we all budget people? I suspect Californians are more aware of the state of the state than they have ever been—I know I found myself rooting for the state's May revenues to be some unprecedented amount that helps us climb out of our budget hole—although “hole” probably does not adequately express the depth of the problem. Bottomless pit perhaps? And, no matter how you feel about legalizing marijuana, you have to admit that the potential revenue is attractive.

While there is no obvious solution to our current crisis, we need to not only advocate for the dollars we need to survive, we need to also effectively communicate about the complexity of our system. Limiting repeats or withdrawals, cutting specific programs, and/or decreasing the funding for certain courses are not the solutions. Every seemingly simple solution creates new problems. Decreasing the chances for a student to succeed may save a few dollars, but an amount so insignificant that it does not justify the education that such a change may halt. If we want students to succeed at a given course the first time, we need to advise them properly, support them as needed, and not permit them to enroll in courses for which they are not ready. Cutting programs is something colleges do all the time—based on their local needs and priorities. A system-level call to dismantle programs makes no sense. As colleges work to find ways to cut costs, you bet they are going to cut programs that are

costly or not attracting students. And cutting costly programs, such as nursing, is contrary to the state's needs. Furthermore, changing funding for some courses is not going to fix anything—yet another move that has only minimal impact on the dollars spent, but a huge impact on local functioning.

The addition of “flexibility” to our local budgeting has meant the devastation of student support services—and things are expected to get worse. While federal dollars may have helped to fill in some gaps—we don't have them any more. I bring this up as it is an integral issue or theme whenever we speak to the budget—the struggle that we face—do we serve more students with fewer services, or fewer students with more services? When dollars are tight, what do we opt for—ensuring “access” or ensuring “success”? Inevitably, one has to make choices.

“The addition of “flexibility” to our local budgeting has meant the devastation of student support services—and things are expected to get worse.”



Are we doing students a disservice when we offer them access to courses, but we do not support them in succeeding?

But it is still not that simple. “Access” needs to be defined more completely. Viewing “access” as the chance to take a class is too simplistic. Are we doing students a disservice when we offer them access to courses, but we do not support them in succeeding?

I recently heard a formal name for something that I’ve found myself talking about without a formal name—the iron triangle. The iron triangle is a reference to the interaction of costs, access, and quality. I’d argue that somehow we have to fit success and accountability into this triangle—but I don’t think they have a clearly defined place—perhaps our triangle needs to be in three dimensions and have more sides.

Quality sounds like a euphemism for accountability. I say euphemism because there are many who view accountability as yet another dirty word. Why? Not because there is an interest in being NOT accountable, but due to how the term may be defined and by whom. We’ve seen it defined, in some educational contexts, as a score on a test, but does a test measure the real quality that we would hope for as a consequence of a higher education? I would argue not—we want students to learn to think, not learn to take a test. The fundamental flaw of “no child left behind” is its focus—“no child left untested”.

There has to be a better way to measure student progress—one that does not compel teachers to focus on test results as opposed to skill attainment.

In the higher education realm, perhaps it’s simpler? We can measure completions—of courses, of certificates, of degrees. While these may all be well and good as measures of accountability—are they measures of quality? I would argue not—if too great an emphasis is made on such “outcomes”, we are incentivized to pass students and to decrease requirements. We have already seen hints of this elsewhere—the Chancellor of the CSU has suggested that their system cease to require the completion of upper division GE courses and we, the community college system, are constantly criticized for requiring local graduation requirements that generally aim to ensure that a student has cultural competence, information competency, and/or an understanding of the importance of physical activity in maintaining one’s well-being. Pending legislation (SB 1440) even goes so far as to mandate that we develop degrees that do not have these useless “add-ons” (yes, that’s sarcasm).

And success—where does success fit into the mix? If we assume that quality, accountability, and success are all best measured by counting completions and we assume that there will be no incentives to increase metrics by decreasing quality but we put no more money into the system, what are colleges to do? How do you make yourselves look better without spending more and without asking for less from students? It is ever-so-simple—you reduce access. If we are even the tiniest bit selective—if we somehow selectively increased access for those who were more likely to succeed—let’s say high school graduates and those who are able to attend college full-time—we could increase success by all accounts and not increase costs. But, at the same time, what would we be doing? Taking away access from those who need it most.

So my point is that few outside of education really contemplate the complexity of the local choices that have to be made. These are messages we need

the public to understand—how can you expect us to do better when we are not funded to do so? As they say, there is no free lunch.

The money for community colleges—for all of higher education—has been declining for some time. We have known for a long time that our funding was not growing as it should and the predicament we are in today is really not a surprise. Our state’s budget process is fundamentally flawed and the public values what we do—yet does not want to pay for it.

Where is the money? If you ask legislators, they don’t know—and may even argue that one can’t pay for higher education at the expense of pulling the plug on grandma. Of course if we don’t fund higher education, the revenues to pay for grandma’s care will continue to decline—but we do not see any interest in budgeting beyond the here and now. Why delay gratification when you face term limits and won’t be around to ultimately see the fruits of your thoughtful planning?

There has to be more money—new money. Where should that money come from? The California Community Colleges have always placed a premium on access—and this can only be achieved by being state-supported public institutions with low fees. The position of Academic Senate is that there should be no fees—a position I have had to argue

while students argued for fees to be reasonable and predictable.

If we increase fees, we decrease access. Sure, there may be financial aid available—but until we can guarantee that all who would benefit from such aid are getting it, that is a hollow promise.

We are not where we are today due to local districts running amok—but due to the state’s declining investment. We can’t continue to do more and better

with less. Higher education is a public good—the state needs more degree-holders. As the sole access point to education for many of our citizens, the community colleges perform a service and should be funded by the state to continue to do so.

Our competitors today are entities that may invest as much money on marketing as they do on academics and engage in aggressive means to recruit and retain students. And they also lead

students to accrue great debt. Such opportunities may do more harm than good—this is not where we want to be.

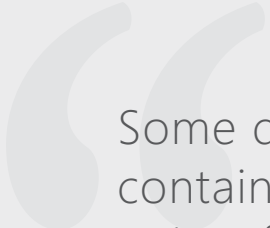
Should we examine our curriculum and course offerings for “fat”? Should we be identifying ways that we can do better? You bet. But altering what we are and who we serve would do a disservice to our students and the state as a whole. ■



Discipline Specialization

BY WHEELER NORTH, CHAIR, STANDARDS AND PRACTICES COMMITTEE

When faculty are assigned to teach a course (for which student enrollment earns state apportionment and/or credit), they must meet discipline minimum qualifications as defined in *Minimum Qualifications for Faculty and Administrators in California Community Colleges* (AKA the Disciplines List). But what can a district do in those cases where skills are required beyond a discipline's specific minimum qualifications? What if there are specific instructional reasons for some class instances of the course to be bilingual as allowed in Legal Opinion O 06-10? What if Allied Health, Public Safety or other career technical education (CTE) courses require state or federal certification of the faculty? How does a college assure faculty have the required additional skills needed to teach a section via distance education (DE)?



Some disciplines contain many units of major preparation ranging over incredibly diverse spectrums of skills and capabilities.

It is important to note that a district can hire faculty based upon any requirement that is equal to or higher than the minimum requirements listed in the Disciplines List. The question this article is addressing is how to assure faculty assigned to teach a given course possess the additional skills that are required for that instance.

The primary mechanism most of us are familiar with is the typical right-of-assignment. This is usually a negotiated condition which gives administration the authority to assign faculty to teach courses. Many districts additionally have negotiated consultation requirements where these assignments are made in consultation with faculty such as department chairs or other governance groups.

But one caveat to this is some districts also have negotiated seniority rights for certain faculty to be given preference in assignments. In one district part-time faculty who have taught a given section four times can apply for a seniority status that gives them the right to teach that course over other faculty with less or no seniority. Hopefully districts are able to hammer out these arrangements in a manner that assures seniority rights do not undermine a program's ability to properly assign faculty where class instances require additional skills and competencies.

Title 5 §55202 obligates districts to assure that every DE course is delivered with the same rigor and quality as its face-to-face counterpart. §55204 requires effective instructor contact with the students for DE sections and §55206 specifically requires a separate curriculum approval process for courses to be delivered via DE. Thus there is an implied authority given to the curriculum committee to assure

DE curriculum appropriately details those teaching and learning components which are necessary for quality, effective contact and equal standards for student success in the DE environment. Some districts have negotiated a requirement for additional DE teaching skills and they may provide this training in-house or rely on development opportunities such as those provided by the community college system's @ONE project. In the end this creates a district-wide qualification for DE faculty.

Title 5 does not prohibit the above 'process concepts' from also being exercised to assure other specialty skills are possessed when a given course is taught. Many CTE courses and programs are designed to lead students to one or more certifications. A common requirement is the faculty must possess these same certifications. The simple solution is to require these certifications at the time of hiring; thus no one gets hired who does not possess them. Where it gets problematic is when there are a variety of skills or certifications that exist within one discipline. This is not uncommon in Allied Health and Public Safety programs. So curriculum developers can rely on right-of-assignment, or there may be a negotiated element that limits right-of-assignment where specialty skills or certifications are needed.

It is also possible to tie specific requirements (beyond discipline assignments) to a course. Title 5 §55002 is very clear, in three places, about the curriculum committee's obligation to assure every course is taught by a qualified instructor. However doing this means faculty delivering every class section must then meet those additional requirements. So in the case where a course may need section instances that are bilingual, and others that are not, reliance on right-of-assignment via consultation is likely the most practical method. Another option would be to create two distinctly different courses with both having similar goals but intended for distinctly different audiences. In some ways the above mentioned legal opinion, O 06-10, would be best implemented by this latter means since it requires a pairing of the bilingual offering with another course.

And language may not be the only reason for needing auxiliary skills in a given course instance. Expertise comes in many forms, in many disciplines. Take the disciplines of Art or Humanities for example. Many specializations exist within these disciplines to the degree that the best achievable student experience comes from having those most qualified in the specific specialty teach those courses. Where a course has fixed objectives but the content varies (special topics), faculty assignment should be based upon expertise. Again, right-of-assignment is probably the most practical way to go, but there are other options.

It is important to exercise caution about some of these options to remain flexible. A consultation-based right-of-assignment process tends to provide this in most cases. Over-proscription can back a program leader into requirements that exclude all available candidates. Some disciplines contain many units of major preparation ranging over incredibly diverse spectrums of skills and capabilities. A faculty's ability to teach across this gaggle of courses varies quite a bit for a variety of reasons. Yes, they all can be taught by any discipline faculty in a rigorous manner, but many courses will entertain a much greater student experience when faculty with specialized skills and currency deliver them. So, departments often aim for this lofty ideal via right-of-assignment, if they can. However, when fulfilling loads collides with the class schedule and section reductions, or other institutional maladies, then sometimes teaching it in a rigorous manner is better than not being able to offer the course at all.

In closing, it is important to end this discussion on the idea that a strong and effective working rapport between faculty and administration is central to a functional assignment process. This is a complex, ongoing evolution where greater flexibility is usually beneficial as long as it can be had without sacrificing high quality, rigor and compliance. ■

Communication is Key

BY DAN CRUMP, CHAIR, RELATIONS WITH LOCAL SENATES COMMITTEE 2009-2010

One of the major charges of the Relations with Local Senates Committee is to “augment the work of the Executive Committee in its efforts to provide an opportunity to share information on issues of concern at the local and state levels.” Last year, we sent out a survey to local senate presidents asking for examples of how they communicated Academic Senate activities and actions with others at their college. We are sharing some of these responses in the hope that they might help you at your college (and hey, maybe we can use some of these suggestions to be more effective at the state level).

As could be expected, many senate presidents talked about the benefits of email in the transmittal of information (although it was interesting that one respondent stated that “email sucks because it’s so convenient”). Email can be a curse and blessing—yes, you have a chance to reach everyone, but you do lose some personal contact. It should be stressed that use of email should reach ALL faculty—we encourage you to make sure that adjunct faculty have college email addresses and that you have the capability to have access to the full list of email addresses. Several presidents also talked about using blogs to provide immediate and up-to-date information. Still others mentioned that they send out regular communications (either electronic or written) to faculty, either as part of a faculty newsletter (possibly in combination with the union newsletter) or as a separate communication.

Resolutions for Senate plenary sessions and changes to the Disciplines List were cited as two of the most important pieces of information that presidents want to share with the faculty. Many presidents provide e-links to the resolutions as they are listed on the Senate website and others schedule discussion times on the agendas of the senate meetings before the plenary session. And you always try to make it relevant to the

recipient. That is especially important with proposals to change (or add) a discipline on the Disciplines List. Many presidents (and I did this also) make a special effort to send copies of proposals to the faculty in the disciplines affected. The feedback is so important for the session delegates (many times the president) to get in order to make an informed vote at session.

What are some of the ways that we inform from the state level? The President’s Update, a regular message of the Academic Senate President, used to be snail-mailed to all local senate presidents. That was good to inform the presidents, but it wasn’t very easy to share it with others on campus. It is now emailed to all local senate presidents. Now that it is available in e-format, it is easy for senate presidents to turn around and forward the Update to all faculty (and others) on campus. Copies of the senate’s Rostrum publication are still mailed out to the local senate presidents for distribution, but it just isn’t cost-effective to get enough to each college to share with every faculty member. Luckily, the Senate now provides the Rostrum in e-format, in addition to mailing out paper copies. What I did when I was a local senate president is request fewer copies of the Rostrum to be mailed to me (I asked for about 50 even though there are almost 1000 faculty at my college). When I received the e-link to the Rostrum, I would send an email to all faculty, including a link to the Rostrum (and also touting my contribution to the environment by not using as many paper copies!). I would always mention that I could send someone a paper copy if they so desired (I got about two or three such requests each time). Now, I can’t guarantee that all 1000 faculty opened up my link to the Rostrum, but I think more people knew about the publication and the information available in it.

In closing, I wish to thank the local senate presidents who served on the Relations with Local Senates Committee this past year with me. They were instrumental

in planning the program for the Faculty Leadership Institute, helping me answer questions from faculty in the field, and just being good connections with the colleges. Thanks to Dolores Davison (Foothill College), Don Gauthier (Los Angeles Valley Col-

lege), Michele Hester-Reyes (College of the Sequoias), Chris Hill (Grossmont College), Rod Patterson (West Los Angeles College), John Stanskas (San Bernardino Valley College) and Karolyn van Putten (Laney College)—you were great! ■

Julie's Inbox

The Academic Senate receives many requests from the field, and most of them come through the Senate Office into the inbox of our own Executive Director Julie Adams (hence the name of this column). As you might imagine these requests vary by topic, and the responses represent yet another resource to local senates. This column will share the questions and solutions offered by the President and the Executive Committee. Please send your thoughts or questions to Julie@asccc.org.

Dear Julie,

We have many part-time faculty at our college, and the senate is considering adding a part-time senate representative. What advice can you give us about including our part-time colleagues in the senate?

Signed Love Our Part-Timers

Dear L.O.P.T.,

The Academic Senate fully supports the inclusion of part-time faculty in the work of the senate whenever and wherever possible. Several senates across the state have part-time representatives, encourage part-time faculty to serve on committees, and some are developing part-time issues committees. All these efforts are good for faculty, students and the college.

Logistically, your senate will have to determine the level of participation desired and the availability of part-time faculty to participate in senate work. There are equity issues to be considered when including part-time faculty, such as whether there will be compensation for part-timers who serve, whether the vote of a part-time representative will equal the vote of a full-time representative, who votes to select part-time representatives, and making sure that all part-time faculty feel equally invited to join in the work. Different senates have dealt with these questions in different ways, and the union may be able to help in negotiating more equitable practices at the college.

Senate policies should also be reviewed for equitable practices and inclusion, not just for part-timers, but for all faculty at the college. Whatever your senate decides, all faculty participating in the work of the college should be respected, encouraged and recognized for their contributions.

It might be useful to first survey your part-time faculty to determine interest and to recruit some individuals to lead these efforts. If your college has a part-time faculty orientation during faculty development or convocation, then senate leaders could explain the options or new opportunities to the group. Department or division chairs might be able to recommend some part-time faculty for various assignments. The senate could also survey its committees to see if part-time faculty appointments would strengthen the committees and improve their work. Then the college committees can do the same.

Including part-time faculty in the regular business of the college and the senate is an important step for a more unified approach to serving students. We encourage you to continue to find ways to share the wealth of work on campus by equitably including all faculty interested in service to the extent possible.

Good luck!

Executive Committee

Los Medanos College: A Basic Skills Success Story

BY JON DRINNON, CHAIR, FACULTY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE 2009-2010

In 1999 Los Medanos College used Title III funds to reorganize their English program based primarily on the pedagogical principles taught by the San Francisco State University composition program. Their reorganization incorporated all the components of their English program from transfer to basic skills, involved all of their faculty both full-time and part-time and was strongly supported by the LMC administration. They knew they had to act to improve their program, and the whole college pitched in.

Since then Los Medanos College has gone from the one of the bottom colleges in the Bay Area to one of the top as measured by student success after transfer and by other measures of student success within their college. I would like to share with you the various aspects of their reorganization that made it such a resounding success.

They knew that for any reorganization to work they had to bring in the part-time faculty as well as the contract faculty who were a part of the reorganization. So they set up a two-hour orientation/department meeting each semester that was mandatory for all faculty who had not attended one in the past. All the new hires took this very seriously since they had to attend to get the classes. From a written manual with sample assignments and suggested texts they went over all aspects of what was expected of the instructors at all levels. They had already worked through the problems associated with getting contract faculty on board, but the part-time contingent was more fluid and thus more focus and effort was required to ensure all aspects of the approach would be followed by as many faculty as possible.

I do not have time or space within the confines of this article to get into a full account of what they had to do to set up this reorganization or to keep it going. But I do think it is important that I stress the discrete elements that made up this systematic approach to their successful methodology, each element an essential component to the integrity of a system that transformed their program into one of the most successful composition programs in the state. To a large extent their plan incorporated the following principles from the San Francisco State composition program:

1. A top-down approach rather than bottom-up. This means the essay is taught AT ALL LEVELS rather than grammar to sentence to paragraph to essay. This allows students to work in the genre as a whole and learn about good sentences, paragraphs etc. while they are learning about and practicing writing essays. This saves time, contextualizes learning, and is much more efficient.
2. Combining reading and writing at all levels with the awareness that they are inextricably intertwined (say that three times fast). Neither can be shortchanged or done separately if you want an effective time-efficient program. How you do both in the same class requires a clearly defined, well thought-out and followed systematic plan.
3. Grammar is systematically integrated into the writing process, utilizing a system of error correction that is graduated and places more emphasis on student learning and responsibility. Explaining how that is done would go against my promise to be brief.

4. Primarily non-fiction is used to teach expository writing. Reading expository non-fiction allows students to see models of what they are being asked to do so that they can use them to create their own essays. Then in-class group work is done on the reading at the lower levels to ensure that all students are benefitting from the reading assignments and understanding the reading.
5. Critical thinking is emphasized at all levels. The only difference is that expectations are lowered at the lower levels.
6. George Hillocks' research on how to teach composition is followed: procedural rather than declarative teaching, sentence combining for sentence maturity, scales and checklists to make expectations clear, incorporating the reading into the writing process so that students know that they have to do the reading and understand it because they will have to use it in their essays, inquiry topics based on academic expository writing and studies, which prepares students to do the kind of writing that they will encounter in their other classes.
7. Summaries are used to start off the course in order to internalize certain aspects of the expository mode and to begin working with reading comprehension while at the same time helping them to move beyond the personal mode of writing. Pre-reading exercises and schema connection exercises are used at the lower levels to enhance reading comprehension.

This is just a skeleton of what LMC did, the basis for their research-based systematic approach. But it is a skeleton that will come to life for your students just as it did for LMC if all the elements are respected and applied with care.

Many of our transfer students flounder without a good reading/writing foundation. All the more reason to spread the word through faculty development activities and other resources on effective practices for teaching reading and writing and models such as LMC's for restructuring English programs based on sound research. ■

Upcoming Events

2010 Fall Plenary Session

November 11-13, 2010

Sheraton Park at the Anaheim Resort, Anaheim, CA

2011 Vocational Education Leadership Institute

January 27-29, 2011

Hyatt Regency Newport Beach,
Newport Beach, CA

2011 Teaching Institute (Basic Skills Across the Curriculum)

February 25-26, 2011

San Jose Doubletree, San Jose, CA

2011 Accreditation Institute

March 18-19, 2011

Napa Valley Marriott, Napa, CA

2011 Spring Plenary Session

April 14-16, 2011

SFO Westin, Millbrae, CA

2011 Faculty Leadership Institute

June 16-18, 2011

Claremont Hotel Club and Spa, Berkeley, CA

2011 Student Learning Outcomes Institute

July 13, 2011

Marriott Mission Valley, San Diego, CA

2011 Curriculum Institute

July 14-16, 2011

Marriott Mission Valley, San Diego, CA

In Defense of Teaching: Qualitative Assessment

BY JOE SAFDIE, SLO AND ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE, SAN DIEGO MESA COLLEGE

We sometimes forget that the classroom, whether virtual or face-to-face, is a mysterious place: lots of different things are always going on, and good teachers have to hustle to stay aware of even a small portion of them. It helps, for example, to have a sense of whether or not the students are understanding or engaging with the subject matter and the extent to which they're exhibiting thoughtfulness in responding to it. But other elements, some of which aren't strictly academic, are also important: their emotional and social development; whether they can apply what they've learned to future enterprises; even their relative enjoyment of the class. Lately, we've been trying to measure such things by assessing student learning outcomes—which, among other things, might give teachers more information about students who aren't doing well and the opportunity to help them—but the jury is still out. Because there's still more to consider: how many students in the class work full-time or recently had their financial aid withdrawn? Is the class an elective or required for their major? For how many is English their second or third language? Did they test into the class, take the preceding class in the sequence, or self-select? Are students texting each other in class? Etc., etc.

We can find out the answers to some of these questions, and often they might inform some of what we do. But whatever the answers are, they contribute to the alchemical beaker of a class as much or more so than the data yielded through student learning outcomes (SLO) assessment. In fact, one problem with SLOs is that breaking the class down into certain measurable elements and not others can give us too narrow a picture of the essentially mysterious

conversion of course material into what's called, in another context, "actionable intelligence." Michael Pollan, in his *In Defense of Food*, has a similar complaint against "nutritionism":

Another potentially serious weakness of nutritionist ideology is that, focused so relentlessly as it is on the nutrients it can measure, it has trouble discerning qualitative distinctions among foods...Milk through this lens is reduced to a suspension of protein, lactose, fats, and calcium in water, when it is entirely possible that the benefits, or for that matter the hazards, of drinking milk owe to entirely other factors ... that have been overlooked. Milk remains a food of humbling complexity... (p. 31)

As, I would submit, are classes, on every day and in every way. And yet, there are qualitative distinctions between them: everyone knows when they're in a good one, or teaching a good one, over a day or over a semester. In fact, professors who constantly teach good classes might be considered "better" than others because the students in those classes are energized, enthusiastic, and succeed at higher rates in subsequent classes. On the other hand, there are good students and poor students in every class: is there a way to increase the ratio of good ones to poor and thus "improve student learning?" SLOs, as well as the collection of "best practices" and programs like the Basic Skills Initiative and Race to the Top would seem to depend on affirmative answers to this seemingly simple question, but ... I'm not so sure. Has any best practice resulted from factoids like "80% of the students demonstrated a facility with creative thinking"? Can we measure the actual learning that takes place in a classroom without losing the classroom?

I think we can, but it depends on giving qualitative evaluation—rather than just quantitative assessment—a bigger place at the table. Here’s an example of what I mean, using a rubric from the SLO software system “Taskstream” for assessing a poem in a creative writing class:

	1	2	3	4
Metaphor	There are no metaphors in the poem, thus indicating a lack of understanding about metaphors.	Some language appears as if it was intended to be a metaphor, thus indicating understanding of definition. However, the metaphors are either not fully developed, or appear as similes.	Metaphors are present, but there is obvious confusion between metaphors and similes.	Full understanding and application of metaphorical language is evident.
Imagery	There is no evidence of imagery in the poem; no evidence of the understanding of imagery.	There is evidence of imagery, but it is randomly applied, thus indicating lack of clear understanding.	The imagery is applied to standard words or phrases, but it is not very vivid.	The imagery is so vivid that it paints a picture with words, thus indicating a clear understanding of imagery.
Tone	The tone or mood of the poem is unclear.	The tone or mood of the poem is somewhat clear, but inconsistent.	The tone or mood of the poem is clear, but inconsistent.	The tone or mood of the poem is completely clear and consistent with the context of the poem.
Rhythm	There is no recognizable rhythm to the poem.	There appears to be rhythm to the poem, but it is somewhat inconsistent.	The rhythm of the poem is easily recognized, but does not make sense with the content.	The rhythm of the poem is easily recognized and clearly consistent with the context.
Line/Word Spacing	The poem looks like prose; no clear sense of the significance of spacing.	The text is formatted in poem “form”, but the spacing does not seem purposeful.	Some spacing seems purposeful and creative, other spacing seems accidental or random.	The poem’s line and word spacing is creative, purposeful, and enhances the meaning of the poem.

And here's what I would submit to you about this rubric: it's no better or worse than almost any other rubric I've seen. But somewhere in this elegant construction, the thing we're trying to measure has disappeared. Where's the poem? For that matter, where is the student? Put aside that the list of criteria on the left might not be ideal: whatever the criteria was, the work under consideration would be lost in a sea of aggregated numbers. What would it tell me if, say, of the 23 students left in this creative writing class (after seven had withdrawn or just stopped coming, another thing that isn't covered by SLO assessment), 16 of them had scores of 3.2 on their recent poems? How could I use that information to improve the class, let alone share it in any sort of meaningful way with my colleagues?

Mind you, I was SLO Coordinator at my college for 2½ years until the position got eliminated because of the budget crisis. And I'm someone who believes that the idea behind SLOs is a good one: that there are some general, overarching skills and abilities that students should pick up while they're in college that might be different than or unrelated to the mastery of course material. But the Great Chain of Being seemed like a good idea at one point as well; like everything else, it's all in the details. I know some people have used the results of their SLO assessments to make changes in a class or practice or mode of instruction that have helped students learn more, or better, and that's great: that is, after all, part of our job responsibilities. But in such cases, I feel sure of two things: 1) the numerical scores have been discussed, and interpreted, and argued over, by colleagues who are teaching the same course, and 2) the measurement retained essential contact with the phenomenon it was measuring, which isn't always easy to manage when dealing with the abstraction of numbers.

For example, the latest report on SLOs, conducted by REL West researchers and agreed to by the Academic Senate, compares the SLOs from one class (English 1A, or transfer-level English composition) in different California community colleges—but to my eyes, it doesn't really tell us much at all. That's not because all the colleges didn't participate: it

wouldn't have mattered if all 112 had. It's because the SLOs here are operating at a level that's thrice removed from anything real: they're removed from the context of the class, the class is removed from the context of the department and school, and the outcomes are then compared to other such outcomes and to an external set of descriptors, the value of which is assumed and never argued. Such surveys tell us nothing about a particular class and the students in it, and, I think, have the further potential to lead to standardization and a loss of aesthetic diversity in our teaching practices.

It might be time for a few qualifications. I don't believe that numbers are evil (something my own college researcher mentioned after reading a draft of this piece), and I also follow her in believing that quantitative and qualitative assessment shouldn't be mutually exclusive. But words and numbers "measure" different things in different ways: words can't be reduced to captions for graphs, and we should be wary of any system that translates our practice into abstractions. It's also possible that many faculty who have resisted SLOs have done so because of the perceived "injustice" of exclusively quantitative results. The nature of good teaching is—and must remain—an art: not just a science.

Interestingly enough, as I was composing this piece, this e-mail came through:

The experience of performing is very similar to channeling. The more open I am, the more these ideas come into mind ahead of time. I'm performing but I can see these options in the future and can continue performing... I'm performing live, and I get a preview of a potential idea. I can use it however I want. I can rotate the shape. I can put it over here or put it over there and create a strategy in real time. When I'm open, I see more pieces ahead of time. (Watts)

This seems familiar to me, because it's what happens with good lecture/discussions in class. But I don't think it can be quantified, any more than I think a student's ability to think critically can be: simply, a class is more than the sum of its parts. But

I can describe it, qualitatively, and Reggie Watts, in this article in Artforum, just did.

What would qualitative assessment look like? Wouldn't it take more time? The answer to the second question is probably "yes, a little," and I'll come back to it before I close. But including narrative description as part of the assessment is only part of the story; the other part is the assignments for which it might profitably be used. When I was teaching (briefly) in Europe, we gave students a sort of "exit interview" called a colloquium at the end of the term instead of a final exam, in which we asked them open-ended questions about the course material: similar things could happen in individual conferences at any point of the semester. Similarly, oral reports or presentations, perhaps organized in groups, would provide ideal prospects for qualitative evaluation, as would, of course, written documents. In all of this, direct observation is as impor-

tant as measurement; the assignments we're asking the students to do should give them lots of chances to exercise critical and creative thinking, and our evaluations of those assignments would naturally follow suit. Just as, in our own evaluations, we usually pay more attention to student comments than the mathematical scores, the notes we jot down using qualitative assessment could be shared with our colleagues more profitably than an abstract statistical average.

There are even ways to make qualitative assessment of SLOs not so time-consuming. For example, we can still use rubrics, but they could be "empty," keeping the criteria we're looking for on the left, but leaving spaces for snatches of narrative description and observation in the middle. Below is an example from Mesa's English 49 class (a developmental English class one level below transfer-level):

Rubric for Assessing Critical Thinking in English 49:

"Upon completion of English 49, students will be able to ..."

Criteria	Sophisticated	Competent	Emergent	Beginning
Analyze and evaluate a reading assignment's argument				
Define the purpose and audience for their own writing				
Construct effective arguments in response to assigned reading				

A few comments: here, there are words across the top for the various levels of attainment, not numbers: this was obviously constructed by English professors! But, of course, you could use the numbers 1-4, or you could use three columns instead of four, labeling them, perhaps, “Exceeds Standards,” “Meets Standards,” and “Doesn’t Meet Standards.” The important point is that you have space to write down a few comments while the student activity is happening.

Otherwise, we run the risk that this enterprise will eventually become another version of No Child Left Behind, an outcome that many of us have worked many hours to avoid. As Pollan, again, reminds us:

Scientists study variables they can isolate; if they can't isolate a variable, they won't be able to tell whether its presence or absence is meaningful. Yet even the simplest food [class] is a hopelessly complicated thing to analyze, a virtual wilderness of chemical compounds, many of which exist in intricate and dynamic relation to one another, and all of which together are in the process of changing from one state to another. So if you're a nutrition scientist [faculty member doing assessment] you do the only thing you can do, given the tools at your disposal: Break the thing down into its component parts and study those one by one, even if that means ignoring subtle interactions and contexts and the fact that the whole may well be more than, or maybe just different from, the sum of its parts. This is what we mean by reductionist science. (p. 62)

Whatever SLOs are or aren't, I don't think many people would feel thrilled by the description of their assessment as reductionist science. Still, given the necessity to measure the extent of our students' learning, the question becomes: how do we do that in a way that isn't reductionist? I submit that using qualitative assessment as an equal partner to the quantitative targets we set, and increasing the amount of different activities and assignments we use for such measurement, would be a start. By so doing, we'd also better recognize the astonishing balancing act that teachers perform each and every day.

Works Cited

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- Watts, Reggie. "500 Words." *Artforum*. *Artforum International Magazine*. 6-29-10. Web. On Al Filreis' blog. "where is this leading me?—on improvisation." 7-3-10. ■